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ABSTRACT

Three criteria used to differentiate public and private colleges/universities are considered, and it is suggested that these variables of financial source, control, and mission are not adequate distinctions. Although public universities receive greater shares of their income from the government than do private ones, there are difficulties in establishing an accepted cut-off point. Even if reasonable demarcation points could be established within each nation or state, it would be difficult to have a criterion that would enable comparison with other countries. A related approach is to assess the financial character of the university as consumer-oriented, even profit-oriented, or nonprofit-oriented. However, most private universities worldwide, as well as public universities, are nonprofit. Even form of control would not distinguish between universities labelled private and public, since it is common for governments to delegate substantial self-rule to public universities. The criteria of who appoints the administrators or the ultimate authority also do not offer a clear criterion to identify private and public universities. It is also difficult to distinguish different missions or clientele of private and public schools. Two alternative approaches are examined. A bottom-up approach would establish what universities called private and public actually do. The second approach, which is favored, relies more on ideal typic constructions of "privateness" and "publicness." Eventually, universities can be categorized and compared according to multiple continua. Additionally, complex system profiles can be established. (SW)

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THE PRIVATE-PUBLIC QUESTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: DISTINCTION OR EXTINCTION?

by

Daniel Levy

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Public By Any Other Name?

When a well-bred Yale alumnus like William F. Buckley, Jr. sardonicly suggests that his alma mater donate itself to the State of Connecticut ("To tell the truth, I don't know that anything much would happen") [1] some conventional assumptions require re-examination. Chief among these is the much ballyhooed distinction between "private" and "public" universities. Close analysis reveals serious ambiguities: we lack a consistent notion of what defines our types. There appear to be at least three major criteria on which different commentators variously rest their distinctions: financial source, control and institutional mission. Thus, for example, little does it satisfy Buckley that Yale raises most of its own funds, or is administered largely through its own private corporation; if it does not perform a mission sufficiently distinct from that of the University of Connecticut then, well, it may as well join it. In a desperate attempt to reassert its distinctiveness, the private sector has recently rebaptized itself "the independent sector". The new nomenclature is intended to emphasize the sector's autonomy and to legitimize its claim to the public dollar (by downplaying privateness). The second aim, of course, undermines the first.

Looking abroad seems only to frustrate our yearning for clear definitional usage. England, long noted for its paradoxical labeling of private and public secondary-school education, offers an ambiguous picture at higher levels as well. All the universities, even those financed over 90% by the government, form what is sometimes called the autonomous or private sector, distinct not from public universities but from the technical sector of higher education. Perhaps the epitome of ambiguity is the case of Venezuela. There are some rather obviously private universities depending more on the Ministry of Education.[2] These were created by the government to meet private sector needs, but rely heavily on governemnt financing. Thus, a "private-government" sector.

Just as the private-public muddle is not particular to the U.S., it is not, as often supposed, a new phenomenon. Careful scholarship has exposed the myth of pure privateness in the early development of Harvard, Dartmouth, Columbia -- and Yale.[3] All received substantial government funds, indeed demanded them as public responsibility, which legislators, in turn, likewise perceived. Meanwhile, some legislatures declined to give funds to their new public universities. Even when funding to the privates declined, from 1820-1850, legislators remained on university governing boards, and by the time they stepped down, funds had again increased. When, later in the nineteenth century, Harvard's Charles Eliot successfully championed the idea of definite split between private university and state he did so somewhat ahistorically, since a clear "distinction between 'private' and 'public' did not exist in the century between 1776 and 1876".[4] Far from the model of "privateness", reality often involved government funds, representation on boards of trustees, legislative watchfulness and accountability, and the perception of a public mission for the university. Some would argue that a substantial private-public distinction had arisen by 1819 and most would agree that the distinction indeed became a prominent fact in the post Civil War era (surviving fairly well into the middle of this century). The point is that definitional ambiguity is nothing new.

Such ambiguity poses problems for scholarly analysis, where a premium is placed on clarity, communicability and causality. If we lack explicity criteria, we cannot make meaningful or comparative statements. What does it mean to say that a nation's private university sector is vibrant? It become dangerous to extract conclusions about what purposes private universities serve, what their differential output is, how adaptable they are, or what the implications are of dual public-private sectors versus unitary structures.

The problem obviously is far from a purely academic one. Advocates of strong private sectors claim that they foster institutional autonomy, academic

freedom, student and professor choice, responsiveness to society, innovation, diversity, adaptability, and excellence and efficiency through competition. Partisans of public higher education invoke such concepts as progressive public purposes, public accountability, democratic or popular control, equity, coordination and national unification. In some countries, notably in Latin America, the issue has often been public monopoly versus a public-private mix. Thus, the case for privates may involve the virtues of competition and choice between sectors as well as institutions. In other countries, now including most of the Americas, the policy debate is one of degree. Broadly speaking, the issues may be viewed in terms of alternative strategies of development. They may be viewed in relation to Politics and Markets, the degree to which market replaces government or vice versa.[5] Or they may be viewed in terms of prevalent models of linking state and society: "pluralist" models would sustain the existence of spontaneously-created, non-sanctioned, independent, competitive, and decentralized institutions, while "corporatist" models would sustain the planned creation of officially-sanctioned, functionally and explicitly coordinated, non-competitive institutions within a single system which monopolizes the policy field.[6] Private or private-public systems generally approximate the pluralist type more than public systems do, and conversely. Such a contrast of ideal types represents the extremes within which policy choices can be made. In fact, the proliferating literature on corporatism, and "interest-group liberalism", emphasizes the degree to which private and public may blur, as the state penetrates societal organizations ("state corporatism").[7] Many scholars of Latin American politics have sadly noted the loss of freedoms associated with state corporatism, while Ted Lowi, for example, condemns the "pathological and criticizable" tendency of the U.S. government to parcel out authority without "guidelines, checks and safeguards".[8] For now we simply observe that private/public may be viewed within a larger frame-

work, and that what privates do in one system may be done by a pluralist, decentralized competitive public structure in another.

If the private-public question relates to very broad policy choices, it also is central to more specific policy decisions. The balance between tuition and government financing is a salient example in much of the Americas. Congress debates the ramifications of different federal aid programs, just as state legislatures debate those of different tuition plans. Senators Packwood and Moynihan assert that their bill, for tax benefits to families with students, would best preserve freedom of institutional choice. Such choice shores up the private sector. Other policies under consideration to help the private sector include direct state aid to private institutions, more state aid to students and less to institutions (since publics presently receive the bulk of the latter), increased tuition at public universities, and restrictions on enrollments and campus proliferation in the public sector. Competing claims are pressed by public and private-oriented groups. Recently, most of the colleges in the Association of American Colleges split to form the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, "aggressively private" in its demands.[9]

Perspectives on policy choices, broad and specific, become especially pertinent in times of change--creation of private sectors (Venezuela), nationalization of them (Belgium) or indeed any shift of power between sectors. What has much of Latin America been creating, what is the U.S. concerned with maintaining, and what is Canada losing? What are Argentine students doing when they fight the creation of a private sector and what are U.S. legislators doing when they fight to preserve one? A particular U.S. preoccupation is that retrenchment not fall disproportionally hard on the private sector.[10] On the other hand, Latin America is rather unique as a region moving toward increased private enrollments. From 1960-1970 the percentage of its students in private institutions grew from 11% to 23%.[11] Brazil, with the largest system in the region,

will soon have 70% of its enrollments in the private sector. Consequently, our notions of private and public must be better informed by (and for) Latin American experience. And analysis of the U.S. case could benefit from broader perspectives discovered through meaningful intersystem comparisons. Too many U.S. observers mistakenly view private higher education as a uniquely U.S. phenomenon.[12] Even within the U.S., moreover, the need for intersystem comparison is clear, given a federalist structure which breeds important interstate differences.[13]

Thus the private-public question seems particularly significant in the Americas. Most Western Europeans and certainly Communist nations have very few private institutions, though many Asian nations do. While most of the examples used here are from the Americas, North and South, the conceptual issues are considered more broadly. (Similarly, the empirical focus on higher education does not diminish the relevance to other educational levels).

I shall consider each of three differentiating criteria mentioned above. My major purpose is to expose their shortcomings. Certainly a first goal is to underscore how much the extant dichotomy is a gross simplification, and how policy analysis must be more sensitive to vast differences in degree. But is is not just a matter of degree, that privates are simply more private than the publics while not thoroughly private. Things would be more manageable if private and public explicitly designated ideal types between which actual universities were labelled more or less private. Instead, we do not use criteria which consistently work, even for purposes of more or less, to distinguish those universities which we call private from those which we call public. Mostly, criteria are used ad hoc. The indictment applies within the U.S. context -- let along a broader international context. This is not to overlook the existence of certain private and public tendencies. Indeed it is these which we must identify, make explicity, and build upon.

Unless otherwise stated, I labor with the terms "private university" and

"public university" according to extant usage in given systems.

Financial Source

Probably the most commonly used criterion to distinguish public and private is the source of funds. It is an appealing one: The State University of New York gets more of its income from the State legislature than Columbia University does, the National University of Colombia more than the private University of the Andes, etc. The first obstacle, however, is the lack of a clear cut-off point. There are, for example, notorious hybrids like the University of Pittsburgh. And the advent of strong federal research aid confuses the issue further. As a Sloan Commission report points out: "Federal policy for academic R and D is neutral between the public and private sectors..."[14] In fact, given the strength of private research universities, this "neutral" policy means more federal support per capita for the privates, nearly 50% more per student. Some research-oriented privates get most of their income from the government.

As Shils notes, only the state subsidy to institutions provides a sharp (U.S.) financial distinction between private and public.[15] Per student, privates receive only about 1/9 what publics receive.[16] Moreover, institutional grants more than student loans are likely to connote state control, and state grants may also place greater demands on institutions than federal research grants do. But ambiguities also arise with the federal-state qualification. Federal monies do in fact connote control. Decisions on scholarship money become crucial to institutional survival, and research monies may indeed shape the direction of professional tasks. Even at the state level matters are confused when we look beyond institutional aid to student aid. California's Constitution prohibits direct state support for private institutions, but about 85%-90% of state scholarship money goes to students attending private universities, while private enrollments amount to only 10%-12% of the state's total.[17]

The lack of an accepted cut-off point becomes more troublesome as we move to longitudinal and cross-national analysis. University education world-wide is becoming increasingly government-subsidized. Belgium's private universities did not receive government subsidies until after WWI. In 1922 they still claimed only one-seventh of the national higher education budget, but by now they claim more than one-half of it. Some individual private universities receive nearly as much as the public ones. The 1971 University Finance and Control Law simultaneously verifies the public universities' increased autonomy over economic affairs and grants the privates equal financial treatment -- complete with government control, accountability and oversight via government commissions and financial inspections.[18] The Belgian pattern is not unique. Both the Japanese and Brazilian governments are expanding their financial support, and control, of the privates.[19] Clearly, one cannot insist on all-or-nothing categories of government funding to establish public and private, and even 51% non-government support is a rather demanding criterion today. Chile's private universities have relied for some time on the government for more than 80% of their income, and Dutch privates are subsidized 100% by the government.[20]

There is an obviously preferable line of retreat: within a given nation or state, public universities received greater shares of their income from the government than private ones do. But there are still problems. Where is the line drawn between private and public if not at 100% or 50%, for it seems arbitrary to draw it at, say, 70% in order to make perhaps half the universities private. Second, what if a superior university receives proportionally less of its income but more government money per capita than an inferior one? Further, it would be hard to delineate sectors when a public state university receives more than a neighboring private university from its state legislature while the private university receives more from the federal government. Finally, even if we could establish reasonable demarcation points within each nation or state, we would not be properly equipped for comparative discourse. In the

extreme, a private Chilean university could receive a greater share of its income from its government than many U.S. public universities receive from theirs. We would be dealing in somewhat dissimilar concepts: Chilean privateness, often earned at roughly 15% (versus less than 5% for publicness) non-government financing, could not be equated with Mexican privateness, often achieved at 95% non-government financing.[21]

A related approach is to assess the financial character of the university. Is the university a consumer-oriented, even profit-oriented, enterprise, or a non-profit institution? Privateness might require that universities seek to operate at a profit. Public institutions would be run more like public grade schools, fulfilling public responsibilities for non-paying students. But ther are non-profit private organizations. In fact, most private universities, world-wide, are non-profit. Were we to broaden our dichotomy to a trichotomy of private-public-non-profit, we would not resolve nagging ambiguities.[22]

Nor would tuition itself be an identifying criterion. Even if private universities always set higher tuitions than public universities within the same system we run into the now familiar problems of cut-off points and interstate and international comparability. Moreover, many public universities (U.S., Colombia, Chile) are raising tuition while private ones (U.S., Brazil, Japan) are meeting decreasing shares of their costs with tuition. If the trend established by the U.S. Educational Amendments Act of 1972 continues, then government grants to students rather than institutions will, on the one hand, strengthen the "market" by allowing students to choose institutions, but, on the other, will increasingly subsidize the private sector by removing a major obstacle to student choice of private institutions.

Control

Beyond the obvious problems of gauging degrees of control, even form of

control would not distinguish between universities labelled private and public. Private obviously does not mean autonomous; more to the point, it does not mean autonomy from government. Nor do public universities necessarily lack such autonomy. U.S. state universities generally enjoy substantial autonomy compared, for example, to their European conterparts. It probably is in Latin America, however, that one finds the clearest examples of the juxtaposition of "public" to "autonomous". Many of the most autonomous universities, such as the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) have been public, as determined by probably every major criterion except control; they are legally public and expected to spend public monies for public purposes. Practically no one, of any political stripe, within those nations would consider UNAM or the UCV private. Yet they enjoy enviable power to rule themselves. They are accountable to the public only in the broadest sense and hardly need to account for expenditures. The same generally applies, until recently, to such institutions as the University of Buenos Aires and the University of the Republic (Uruguay). Many private universities elsewhere have to account more for whatever public funds they receive.[23] In short, it is common for governments to delegate substantial self-rule to public universities.

A corollary criterion must likewise be dismissed: we cannot go by who appoints the administrators. This approach would concede that public universities could be highly autonomous in academic or even financial matters, but would be administered by publicly-appointed officials. There are too many exceptions. Most major twentieth century Latin American public universities won (at least for some time) the right to appoint their own high officials. Even in West Europe, where formal ministerial appointment is the rule, professional appointment is often the actual practice. It is bootless to investigate whether university employees are civil servants: in some public universities they

are, in others they are not, and, besides, that may just tell us whether the university is defined as public, or may depend on particular labor laws. True, privately-appointed boards of trustees are the executive authorities in many U.S., Japanese, and Mexican private universities but autonomous public universities may also entrust appointments to private boards of trustees.

Neither who appoints nor who is appointed offers a clear criterion to identify privates and publics. There may be a tendency for private persons to be on private boards and public functionaries to be on public boards, but private persons or representatives of private economic or social groups may comprise lay boards to hold public universities responsible to extra-university, public interests. This is a notable practice in Sweden.[24]

Another related criterion suggests itself: ultimate authority. Whatever ongoing self-rule a public autonomous university enjoys, the government retains the prerogative to exert its will in extreme circustances, while private institutions are ultimately accountable to private authorities. But in New York State, for example, "the regents possess the constitutional power to charter and accredit every private institution, to approve every new degree program, to make visitations and require written reports as often as they wish, to set specific standards for the qualification and compensation of faculty members, and to grant or withhold permission for a private institution to close its doors".[25] Further, governments retain ultimate authority over all institutions save in those rare cases where universities (sometimes public ones) hide behind the principle of extraterritoriality. It took explicit legal changes to prohibit extraterritoriality in Venezuela's UCV, which had become a frequent sanctuary for anti-governemnt radicals in the sixties. Usually, in case of conflict, clubs are ultimately trump. In many cases, all higher education institutions come under the jurisdiction of an overall Law of Education.

Mission

It could be argued that sources of funding and control are only procedural factors, that what matters is whether private and public universities do different things. What, then, about the notion of distinct institutional mission (broadly defined)? What do private and public universities undertake to do differently and what do they actually produce that is distinct? From his investigation of a broad range of privately and publicly effected policies, Lowi concludes that one cannot find definite differences in terms of social change, equality and welfare.[26] We search here for any consistent distinguishing trends, not worrying for the moment whether they are intrinsic to privateness/publicness per se.

We can consider the universities' clientele: Whom do the universities educate and whom do they serve (research, job markets). The weakness of the first is related to the private universities' only spotty pursuit of academic excellence. In those nations where the privates are perceptibly superior they indeed attract a distinct student clientele, but superiority is not the rule. Clark and Youn have identified six distinct U.S. private types, differing measurably in quality from Chicago to Bob Jones, while the public sector encompasses three distinct types ranging from Berkeley to Los Angeles City College.[27] In Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina also, both private and public universities run a considerable, and very overlapping, gamut. Broadley evaluated, private sectors are generally superior in Colombia, Peru, Venezuela and probably Mexico. Among the finest institutions in these respective countries are the University of the Andes, the Cayetano Heredia University, the Metropolitan University, and the Iberoamerican University. Private and public may be roughly equivalent in Argentina, due to the publics' drastic decline in recent years, and in Chile, where quality has been relatively even across institutions. Public superiority is found in Brazil, where, as in Japan, it derives largely

from the fact that private institutions have absorbed the bulk of the enrollment explosion. The University of Brasília and the University of Tokyo are among their systems' best. Yet some of the privates, such as the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro and the Waseda University are better than most of the publics, just as many privates lie near the bottom of the pyramid in countries where the private sector is generally superior. The Santa María University in Venezuela is a good example. The claim of privates to distinctiveness based on superior status lacks cross-national consistency.[28]

If the uniqueness of the private sector does not derive from the pursuit of excellence or elitism, it could at least derive from the pursuit of some special values. The absence of these values is precisely what Buckley laments in his God and Man at Yale. If other criteria fail to distinguish his University from great public universities, mission should:

> The critical difference is the corporate sense of mission. At Berkeley that sense of mission is as diffuse and inchoate--and unspecified and unspecifiable--as the resolute pluralism of California society. At the private college, the sense of mission is distinguishing.....It is, however, strangled by what goes under the presumptuous designation of academic freedom. It is a terrible loss, the loss of the sense of mission. It makes the private university, sad to say, incoherent; and that is what I was trying to say when, two months out of Yale, I sat down to write this book.[29]

In short, let academic freedom in the publics pursue pluralist exploration of "all" values but let the privates corporately identify with the particular moral values of their alumni. Such distinctions were more effective in identifying privates in the nineteenth century, when more were pursuing non-secular ends--some would say "the pursuit of truth" as opposed to "free inquiry". Conflict between private (often religious) and public (often secular) education was a central political issue in many countries, the antagonistic poles around which political parties often revolved. In fact, private/public has often been fundamentally a reflection of sectarian/secular. But institutions such as the

Catholic University of Chile (1888) or early American Protestant colleges have generally become more secular or less common. Besides, many public institutions have been sectarian. New World colonial universities, such as the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico, explicitly served Crown and Church simultaneously.

Moving from values to material missions, one common assertion is that private universities meet the needs of the private sector while public ones glut the civil service. The pattern seems to hold in such diverse nations as Mexico and Japan. It demands more exploration. U.S. private institutions' emphasis on liberal arts may belie it. Furthermore, in big countries, the best of the private sector may concentrate in one region (Northeast U.S., Southeast Brazil), serving the private and public market there while leaving public universities to fill jobs in both sectors elsewhere. Cross-nationally the problem is more severe. It is easy to associate public universities with the public economic sector in the Communist bloc, where there is no private sector, but what about West European countries with vibrant free enterprise? Especially where there are practically no "private" universities, the public ones may not be so public after all -- even if funded and controlled centrally by a highly bureaucratized ministry.

Mission becomes decreasingly indicative if we pose more broadly the question of whom the universities serve. All universities claim to benefit the general public, though publics may claim that their benefit is more direct. Harvard rightfully emphasizes its contributions to public leadership and social research. Public tax laws, not to mention research grants, acknowledge the claim. Moreover, public universities may strive to gratify their client's demands, while private universities may strive to meet publicly-defined needs in a given region. The argument can be carried to a not unreasonable extreme. Albornoz believes that the Venezuelan government serves the private economic

sector more than the public one; therefore, its newly-created, publicly-financed universities are really more private than public.[30] (He even hints that all Venezuelan universities are somewhat private insofar as they strengthen the status quo, which itself favors private interests). Performance of public, even government missions is neither an inevitable nor unique hallmark of the public university.[31]

Estant Usage

Finally, beyond the variables of finance, control and mission, there is definition of the last resort: a private university is tautologically whatever is called a private university. Any flower called a rose is a rose and a rose by any other name is not a rose. Such definition is the most commonly used "criterion". It may derive from legal labels or subjective perceptions.

Legalisms can be very misleading. Statutes and laws may give only inadequate glimpses as to why the institution is private or public. It often depends simply who created it. But again, governments can create basically private institutions, as the Dominican Republic did in the sixties, when it was fed up with its Autonomous University of Santo Domingo. Government sponsorship does not define the public university. Even more importantly, labels at best reflect the character of the institution at its inception, while institutions often change their character. Many institutions, such as the Catholic University of Chile, were created by the Church as private institutions, but have undergone considerable degrees of nationalization. If relevant laws may be artifically clear-cut, they may also be fuzzy. The New York State Constitution prohibits public funding of religious education but allows funding of religiously-affiliated colleges. Laws do not provide us with reliable definitional criteria. Nor do we find consistent criteria on which to build clear laws.

An obvious problem with resorting to perception is that it eschews consistent use of objective criteria. Two similar universities may be perceived as public and private by their respective constituencies. Perception is based on different characteristics in different places. Moreover, university people may deliberately try to distort perceptions. They claim the label private in order to attract funds for their distinctiveness or importance to the free market, or to asse-t their academic freedom. Sometimes they may claim it simply to feel different -- and superior. Others declare themselves public to stake their claim to the public dollar or perhaps to progressive egalitarian goals. New institutions may adopt whatever designation existing institutions do not have, especially when they emerge as a backlash to them. This is not to underestimate the importance of perceptions.[32] But they do not necessarily reflect what actually exists.

Retrenchment and Rebuilding

No criteria have appeared which consistently distinguish universities which we call private from those which we call public. Nor is it "just a matter of degree". A continuum, even based on an admittedly ideal typic dichotomy, supposes some explicit criteria on which more private institutions distinguish themselves from less private ones, if only by degrees.

No compensatory substitute emerges, at least at this point. Surrendering the existing dichotomy involves a big price. And that price falls hardes on comparative analysis. If we use some criteria to conclude that university "A" is more private than university "B" in one system and other criteria to decide between universities "X" and "Y" in another system, then we must be very careful in making intersystem comparisons. These are assymetrical relationships. "A" and "X" are not private in the same sense or degree, "B" is conceivably more private than "X", etc. Consequently, it becomes difficult to

assess the ramificatons of larger or smaller, expanding or shrinking, private sectors. Complications for policy analysis and decision are obvious.

There are, however, always more and less adequate alternatives. Less adequate would be to cling to a fictitious dichotomy. The trick is to find the best routes towards establishing what we really do know about private-public and how best to conceptualize and build upon that knowledge. We need not completely write-off the private-public distinction so much as induce a molting process wherein it sheds its false exterior and begins to renew itself in more modest form.

One useful alternative would be a bottom-up approach. Scholars would study what "private" and "public" universities (labelled only by extant definition) actually do. No a priori assumtpions would be made. Knowledge would accumulate piece by piece. Patterns would presumably emerge for certain factors, not for others. The advantages of this approach are fairly obvious. It is careful, unassuming. It is based on close factual analysis of individual cases. Knowledge accumulates every step of the way. Subsequent generalizations are built on facts.

Disadvantages are equally obvious. Considerations of time and effort are paramount. A great commitment would be necessary before knowledge might accumulate beyond the idiosyncratic case-study stage. A good deal of effort would be invested in anallyzing factors that really have little to do with privateness/publicness. It therefore seems prudent to blend this approach with some a priori notions of what sorts of variables (associated with privateness/publicness) interest us. One might study "private" and "public" universities with specific reference to sources of funding, type of control, and institutional mission. Still, the bottom-up approach actually starts by inputing a certain importance to extant private-public labels; these labels establish the units of analysis.

Ideal Types of Private/Public

An alternavive approach might start by postulating ideal types of private/public. Individual universities would then be analyzed according to these types. An institution would be private to the extent it approximates the private ideal type. Rather than building piece-by-piece from the factual, this approach makes certain a priori assumptions about what private and public really mean or should mean. Whereas the bottom-up approach starts from the "private" and "public" cases and seeks to discover what really distinguishes them, this approach starts from the postulated essence of the private-public distinction and seeks to discover how it manifests itself. Choice of approach thus depends largely on whether we ultimately want to know what institutions labelled private and public are really like or where true private and public characteristics are really found.

The relative advantages and disadvantages of the ideal type approach parallel those usually associated with social science models. The ideal type suggests a guide for research, orients data-collection, provides a context for otherwise particularistic findings, and increases the possibilities of comparative statements. It also runs the danger of arbitrarily choosing and coloring the data in accordance with our preconceptions.[33]

In fact, of course, the two approaches can blend. Just as some a priori notion of what may be important can guide the bottom-up approach, so ideal types derive largely from empirical reality, albeit abstracted and idealized. Following Weber, Rudolph and Rudolph write that ideal types are heuristic, formal constructs which "emphasize by accentuation factors that are considered prominent or distinct."[34] Such types deal with relationships and regularities, not necessities. Thus privateness and publicness would derive from an abstracted accentuation of traits which we think of as characteristically private or

public. The goal is to clarify, emphasize, make explicit, purify as much as possible while at the same time distorting reality as little as possible.

No pretense need be made about discovering "the truest" criteria. Ideal types depend on their utility and different ones are more adequate for different analytical purposes. Furthermore, ideal types may focus our attention on central, comparable variables while in no way barring citation of other relevant factors.

Rather than pursuing a single private-public continuum, useful progress may be made toward continua. Private/public would be based on multiple variables. More private funding would not necessarily correlate with more private mission but at least we could create some composite of different variables. Such a composite would show how each variable itself appears, how the variables relate, and how some sort of summary overall evaluation might look.

These variables can be derived in part from empirical tendencies. None of the criteria considered earlier are "wrong" so much as misleading and inconsistent when associated with existing nomenclature. That they are non-determinative does not mean that they are not at all indicative. Showing that financing, control, and mission do not determine a definite distinction does not mean that they are irrelevant. As Abraham Kaplan argues, the fact that we require different indicators to measure something in different contexts does not make the indicators totally invalid but shows that our concept is complex.[35] Once we surrender two neat categories of public and private we are dealing in complex concepts. We can observe that some institutions are more private than others according to certain criteria. Were Yale to become part of the University of Connecticut something private would be lost. The search, then, is to establish meaningful continua along multiple ideal types.[36]

This search for continua may be facilitated by consecutive reference to the three variables discussed earlier: finance, control, and mission. The

idea is to construct ideal types from abstracted notions of privateness/publicness on each variable.[37] These criteria need not always distinguish universities presently called private from those presently called public.

Our earlier analysis of financial source dealt with the degree of government funding, of institutional versus indirect-aid, of self-generated income, and of for-profit versus non-profit goals. Any of these might be validly cited, acknowledging the qualifications, as indicating a degree of privateness/publicness. Surely a profit-oriented institution could be considered more private than a non-profit one, all things being equal. Tuition could indicate more privateness than indirect subsidies. Similarly, government subsidies to institutions could indicate more publicness than indirect subsidies via student aid or tax exemptions, since such subsidies obviously involve some non-government decision over which institutions get what. The single most powerful, consistent defining trait, however, might well be the ratio of non-government to government income. This ignores whether an institution receives more or less government funding per student. University A may get more such funding than university B but still be more private if it receives proportionally more non-government funds than that university. By this criterion all Latin American nations show more privateness in their private than public university sectors.

Control is difficult to assess. It involves such factors as admissions, personnel appointments, decisions over curriculum, intra-university resource allocation, etc. In any case, autonomy alone is an inadequate criterion since fully private universities may be closely controlled by externally-appointed boards, financiers, or alumni. The overriding issue clearly should be institutional autonomy from government control. We need not repeat how even this criterion does not in fact consistently distinguish what are called private

and public universities. As with financial source, it might be well to think in terms of ratios. A government may exercise more contol over university A than B but if A also receives proportionally more direction than B from other external authorities then it is more private. "Privateness" might tend to characterize, for example, universities with proportionally less public representation on their governing boards.

Institutional mission probably presents the greatest difficulty for establishing ideal types. Which missions are simply associated with institutions labelled private and public and which really relate to privateness/publicness? Here one must be especially careful to avoid basing ideal types on normatively glorified ideals. The most appropriate criteria for ideal types should deal with functions that universities perform for private and public sectors. Are curricula, course content, research, graduating students, etc., more oriented to one sector or the other?

System Profiles

Most of the discussion has focused thus far on distinctions among individual universities. It is also relevant, however, to systems. With universities identified as not just private or public but more or less private or public according to multiple criteria, systems cannot merely be labelled X% private. Instead, systems would be comprised of institutions that are more or less private in different ways. System "profiles" would emerge from some aggregation of universities assessed by multiple criteria.

Cross-system comparisons are affected by loss of the dichotomy. Working from a dichotomy it was possible to say how private/public a system was merely by aggregating the individual institutions in each sector. Simple addition revealed that, according to enrollments for example, the system was X% private. Inter-system comparison was easy. A system with 10% enrollment in private

institutions was less private. Once we acknowledge that relatively private universities may be private by different criteria and that some private universities are more private than others, this does not hold. It is not easy to judge which of two systems is more private, to make invidious comparisons, to analyze policy.[38]

A significant implication for inter-system comparison is that some sort of weighting is necessary. Two systems with 15% private enrollments probably are not equally private.[39] What is required is an evaluation of how private the individual universities are (as a composite of our three continua) "multiplied" by the percentage of enrollments in those institutions. Such "weighting" obviously lies beyond our present capability, but some sort of crude estimation is required for system-level comparisons. Also worth figuring in is the relative importance of the private institutions. Two nations may have similarly private institutions comprising 10% of total enrollments, while in only one system are those institutions excellent, with bigger budgets, more influence on national policy, etc. Japan's (80%) enrollments in private institutions do not necessarily make its system four times as private as the U.S. system. Nor does Brazil's private sector really hold over 60% of its system's "weight". Venezuela's system is more private than its 10% private enrollments might indicate. The same could be said of Mexico (15%).

Figure 1 illustrates, albeit very tentatively and crudely, one kind of more useful summary statement we can make about how private a system is. It plots percentage enrollments against the degree of private-public distinction.[40] It suggest, for example, the very different basis of Mexican and Chilean privateness. Even a summary elaboration would indicate that while only 15% of Mexico's students are in private institutions many of these institutions, like the Monterrey Institute, are ruled by private boards of trustees free from government control, financed (98%) by non-government money, identified with the business sector to

which they funnel their graduates, etc. By contrast, Chile educates about 40% in the private sector but this sector (even pre-junta) has been far less distinguishable from the public sector, receiving most of its funds from the ministry and offering only a limited choice for matriculating students. I would consider Mexico's system more private.

A better graphic representation would plot each system along three separate dimensions of degree of privateness/publicness. Such a representation would indicate, for example, that Argentina's private-public distinction is greater in financing than mission. In Figure 1 distinctiveness is represented only as a very rough composite of financial, control, and mission. Furthermore, distinctiveness does not necessarily indicate how private given private sectors are, only how much they differ from public sectors in the same nation. Nor does it indicate how private or public whole systems may be; for example, if the Chilean regime had succeeded in forcing all universities to become self-financing there would be little private-public distinctiveness, but all would have become quite financially private. Numerous other qualifications to Figure 1 are warranted but the point here is simply to give an example of how we can begin to move beyond the dichotomy.

Although broad comparisons do not flow as easily from complex continua and profiles as they do from a simple dichotomy, meaningful statements can be made. Due to the complexity of variables, research may seek out cases where many factors can be held consistant. Longitudinal analysis within a given system is one possibility. Even intersystem comparisons need not deal with whole systems; that is the most ambitious enterprise, required to address issues such as the performance of more and less, or increasingly and decreasingly, private systems. Instead, research can purposely address issues linked to, for example, different degrees of private financing. And

where we do compare whole systems, piece by piece breakdowns are appropriate. Research may report that, compared to system A, system B has a smaller private sector which, however, has greater importance in the system and which is more private with respect to funds generated from non-government sources and autonomy from government control. The key is to substantiate why and how certain systems are more or less private.

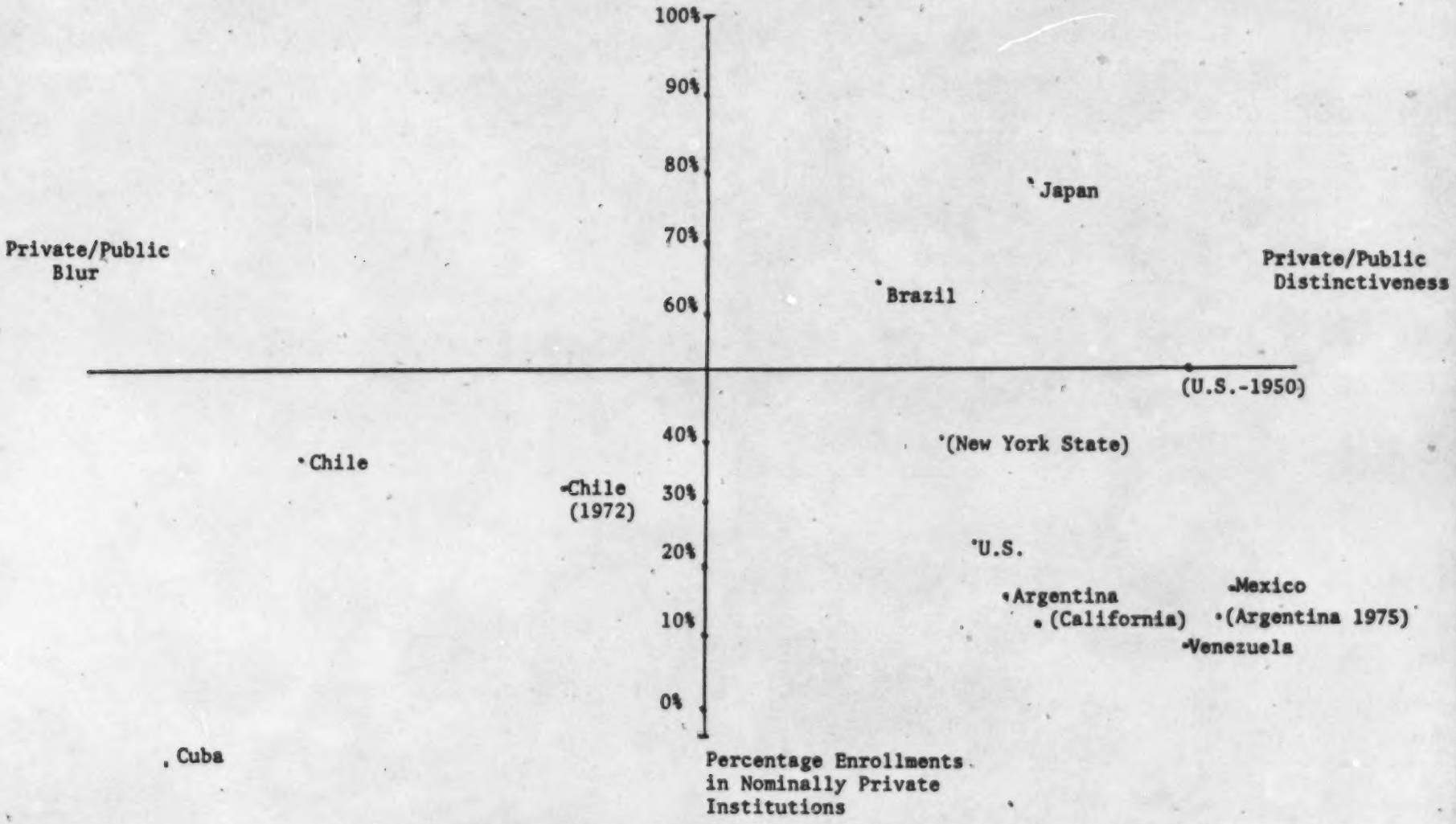
Conclusion

Compared to the dichotomy, the more detailed approaches advocated here obviously have their disadvantages. The research burden is considerably weightier. Parsimonious conclusions are harder to achieve. Such trade-offs are necessary, however, to produce more accurate statements of what we know....and do not know.[41] From the ruins of the too prevalent dichotomy come both serious costs and helpful clues for more meaningful research. Limited and careful conclusions are better than bold ones based on misleading dichotomies. We have explored two alternatives. One is a bottom-up approach. It would establish what universities called private and public actually do. The second, emphasized here, relies more on ideal typic constructions of privateness and publicness. Eventually, universities can be categorized and compared according to multiple continua. Beyond that, complex system profiles can be established.

There are, of course, other valid ways in which private/public could be assessed, none substituting for individual researcher judgement. Finally, all approaches are in some sense transitional, not definitive, as a dialectic develops between the better conceptualizations, which facilitate empirical research, and that research, which contributes to better conceptualizations.

Figure I

Privateness/Publicness of National Systems



Note: 1. We add Argentina and Chile prior to the military rule which has homogenized previous private-public distinctions, particularly in control. And we add the U.S. in 1950 and two contrasting, contemporary state systems.

Footnotes

[1]God and Man at Yale (South Bend, Indiana: Gateway Editions, LTD., 1951, Introduction 1977), p. x/viii.

[2]Orlando Albornoz, La educacion superior en Venezuela (Caracas: FUNDARTE), pp. 39-45.

[3]John S. Whitehead, The Separation of College and State (New Haven: Yale University, 1973).

[4]Ibid., p. 238.

[5]Charles E. Lindblom, Politics and Markets (New York, Basic Books, 1977), p. ix. For one of the best contemporary analyses of relevant policy issues in the U.S. see David W. Brenemann and Chester E. Finn, eds., Public Policy and Private Higher Education (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1978). Unfortunately, like virtually all works on the private question, the book never deals with the meaning of the term private; it differentiates within the heterogeneous private sector but only on such bases as size, quality, staff, etc.--not on degree of privateness versus publicness. And virtually no mention is made of the comparative aspects of public policy and private higher education. Far more sensitive to conceptual meaning and comparative perspective is Edward Shils' "The American Private University", Minerva 11, no. (1973), pp. 6-29.

[6]Among many mainstream definitions of corporatism the most widely cited one is found in Phillippe Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" in The New Corporatism, ed. Frederick Pike and Thomas Stritch (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1974), pp. 93-96. I have tried to show how the private-public question in higher education can be seen as part of the wider pluralism-corporatism question. "Corporatist and Pluralist Principles in

Government-University Relations: Chile, Mexico and the U.S." Paper delivered at the panel on State-Society Relations of the New England Council on Latin American Studies, November 4, 1978, New Haven, pp. 10-11.

[7]Schmitter, pp. 99-105.

[8]Ted Lowi, The End of Liberalism (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), p.

[9]Edward S. Gruson, "The National Politics of Higher Education," report of the Sloan Commission on Government and Higher Education, November, 1977, mimeo.

[10]Recent years have actually shown stabilization in percentage enrollments (after heavy, sustained losses); no longer does the fate of the private sector appear to be a life-and-death issue, although small private colleges may indeed be in serious trouble. But erosion of the privateness of the privates continues.

[11]Alfonso Ocampo Londoño, Higher Education in Latin America: Current and Future (New York: International Council for Educational Development, 1973), p. 11.

[12]See, for example, Howard Howe II, "What Future for the Private College?" Change II, no.4 (1979), p.28.

[13]In the essay I refer more explicitly to international comparison, but the ramifications for interstate comparison are similarly clear.

[14]Gruson, p. 30.

[15]Shils, p. 14.

[16]For recent stastical information see the annual reports by Howard Bowen and John Minter, Private Higher Education (retitled Independent Higher Education starting 1978), (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges). Also see the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, The States and Private Higher Education: Problems and Policies in a New Era (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977).

[17]Robert M. O'Neil, "Law and Higher Education in California," in Public Higher Education in California, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Gabriel Almond (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1974), p. 205.

[18]The preceding analysis was based on Roger L. Geiger, "Universities and the State in Belgium: Past and Present Dimensions of Higher Education in a Divided Society," a working paper published by the Higher Education Research Group, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University, 1978, p. 13.

[19]See William K. Cummings, "The Japanese Private University," Minerva 11, no. 3 (1973), pp. 348-71; Jerry Haar, The Politics of Higher Education in Brazil (New York, Praeger, 1977).

[20]Patricio Arriagada, "Análisis financiero de la educacion superior chilena: período 1965-1978," Ministerio de Hacienda, Santiago, 1978, mimeo, appendix; Thomas Schuller, "Higher Education and University Governance in the Netherlands: Pluralism Old and New," working paper published by the Higher Education Research Group, Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University, 1978, p. 4.

[21]On Mexico see Daniel Levy, University and Government in Mexico: Autonomy in an Authoritarian System (New York: Praeger, 1980, forthcoming,

chapters one and six).

[22]The status of public universities appears even more ambiguous. They are probably best catagorized in the public sector....but may be placed in the non-profit sector. The more they are run as parts of the government bureaucracy they are public, the more they are run as separate institutions pursuing public purposes with a substantial degree of non-government control and funding they are non-profit. Like charitable organizations, political parties and other non-profits, and unlike public bureaucracies, public universities may well receive private donations. (Non-profits, like public institutions, may have explicitly public missions.) Most U.S. public universities probably are public-non-profit hybrids, while public universities in more centralized systems are more clearly in the public sector. It is the universities usually referred to as private that better describe the non-profit sector, as that sector is generally defined. Analysis of private universities, therefore, may be thought of an analysis of the non-profit sector.

[23]Governments may control privates more than publics even within given countries. In (pre-coup) Argentina and perhaps Brazil, the ministry has often used tougher criteria in evaluating private university curricula proposals.

[24]See Rune I. T. Premfors, "The Politics of Higher Education in Sweden: fecent developments, 1976-78," European Journal of Education 14, no. 1 (1979), p. 89.

[25]O'Neil, pp. 204-205.

[26]Lowi, pp. 58-61.

[27]Burton R. Clark and Ted I.K. Youn, Academic Power in the United States (Washington D.C.: American Association of Higher Education, ERIC/Higher Education Research Report No. 3, 1976), p. 14.

[28]Another possible criterion related to distinct clienteles probably correlates significantly with academic excellence. Many of the better U.S. privates attract a national or at least regional constituency, while the state universities are more parochial, at least at the undergraduate level. This applies not just to admissions but to financial contributions. Yet in most nations it is the public university, often the national university, which occupies the broadest magnetic field. Private universities often spring up as local responses to rising social demand for admissions, often by those who could not get into the national university.

[29]Buckley, p. 1.

[30]Albornoz, p. 40-43.

[31]Another criterion relevant to mission could be the university's service function. It might be argued that the public university has a greater responsibility to provide cultural, legal and technical services to its community, but this is debatable if privates also claim to serve the public. Perhaps public institutions would be bound to provide a plurality of services, demanded by the community, regardless of normative content; or perhaps they would provide those mandated by publicly elected politicians. By contrast, private institutions would be freer to choose those services which they deem proper.

[32]Perceptions can influence legal stipulations, student choice, donor

generosity, etc. Thus a kernel of truth may in fact contribute to greater distinctiveness. Research could usefully probe the perceptions of relevant actors. Often, but not always, perception is tied to extant usage.

[33]Very generally speaking, historians may be more at home working from the bottom-up,,social scientists from ideal types. Equally generally, the bottom-up approach may be more suitable for intensive first-hand research, while ideal types may help us order and compare knowledge as it accumulates.

[34]Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Authority and Power in Bureaucratic and Patrimonial Administration," World Politics 31, no. 2 (1979), p. 200.

[35]The Conduct of Inquiry (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1964), p. 52.

[36]We again run into the problem of intrinsic versus associated characteristics. Commonly-cited associated characteristics include (for private institutions) academic excellence, adaptability, elitism, geographically broad recruitment, etc. Rigid conceptualization might bar such characteristics as mere results of circumstance, even probability, not relevant to the privateness/privateness of the institution. But that seems to be an extreme position. It might seem more reasonable to refer the question to bottom-up investigation. If the traits really are not intrinsic to privateness/publicness, then one might expect that few significant patterns will emerge. If certain traits correlate significantly, cross-sectionally and longitudinally, with institutions called private and public, then one might regard them as virtually intrinsic to privateness/publicness. The catch is that correlation and causation are distinct. Certain traits may correlate with "privates" not because they are private but

because of factors that may be associated with why "privates" are called "privates". The utility of better knowledge about associated traits depends on our purposes. It may not tell us whether private institutions are essentially private in the ways they claim. Consequently, it may not help in policy decisions based on such criteria. It is, however, very useful for certain policy decisions which are based on what institutions called private and public really do.

[37]This essay does not deal with many issues related to the private sector which would be important to a theory of the private sector. These include the causes of private sector birth and decline and the consequences of private sectors.

[38]The point is not to reject all inter-system comparisons. Limited comparisons are better than bold ones based on false dichotomies. Transitions from assessments of individual universities to system-wide profiles, to inter-system comparisons must be made carefully. Just as with any statement on how two systems compare, one must make the supporting criteria explicit. Matters are helped some where consistent ideal types have been used. Criteria are then fairly consistent on each variable. But universities would still be defined according to different combinations of the three variables. And then systems profiles would grow from these composites.

[39]In addition to enrollments, full time teaching equivalents, or financial expenditures, would give some quantitative weight.

[40]It blurs by aggregation. The U.S. and Venezuela, for example, have many very private institutions, but also some very ambiguously private ones.

[41]Scope is important. The more limited our comparisons, the more precise they can and should be. Broader scope inevitably risks oversimplification.

National systems aggregate state systems, where there are federalist structures; for example, Massachusetts has majority private enrollments, Wyoming none. Systems also aggregate individual universities, which themselves aggregate undergraduate and graduate levels, pedagogical departments and research institutes. Within systems, which components are more private? With what consequences? A more detailed dialogue on privateness/publicness would be sensitive to such questions.

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